

# Waterless Products: Save Earth, Save Money



Rachel Carter

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One could argue that waterless personal-care and household products have been around for...well, since the invention of bar soap. And they wouldn't be wrong. Waterless products are hardly new, but they're catching on in a big way. From small startups to giant CPGs, companies across industries are launching waterless products in new categories and new formats to help save the planet – and maybe save some money in the process.

[Euromonitor International](#) estimates the beauty industry produced 76.8 billion plastic packaging units globally in 2017, up from 65.6 billion in 2010. In 2018, in the U.S. alone, almost 7.9 billion units of rigid plastic were created just for beauty and personal-care products, according to Euromonitor. Meanwhile, [Zero Waste Week](#) estimates the cosmetics industry produces more than 120 billion units of packaging globally every year.

Waterless products can change that. In addition to reducing or eliminating the need for packaging, waterless products can slash water use and cut carbon emissions along the value chain.

## Who's Going Waterless?

Natural personal-care company Lush is both pioneer and poster child for waterless products. Founded in the U.K. in 1995, the company sells solid hair, body, bath, fragrance, toothpaste and beauty products – most without packaging.

While shampoo bars have been around for a while (since Lush accidentally invented them), companies are expanding the waterless concept in new ways every day. Indie brands have recently launched fully dissolvable shower gel sheets, patent-pending waterless shampoo and conditioner concentrates, and waterless, powdered personal-care products that users mix with water and store in reusable dispensers. One indie skin-care brand just introduced a waterless solid serum.

But major players are also getting in the game. Delphine Viguier-Hovasse, global brand president of L'Oréal Paris, said the brand is focusing on [innovation around waterless products](#) to engage “our consumer in the fight against climate change.” L'Oréal's [Garnier](#) brand recently rolled out a range of solid hair-care products, and [Carol's Daughter](#) just launched a new shampoo bar. [Colgate-Palmolive](#) is following the lead of indie brands like [Bite](#) to launch toothpaste tablets, which eliminate the need for plastic tubes.

And the trend is crossing over into household products, from dissolvable laundry detergent sheets to household disinfectant strips that users dissolve with hot water in any spray bottle. Other companies offer a range of concentrated cleaning products, like refillable, cartridge-based systems or pods that attach to reusable spray bottles.

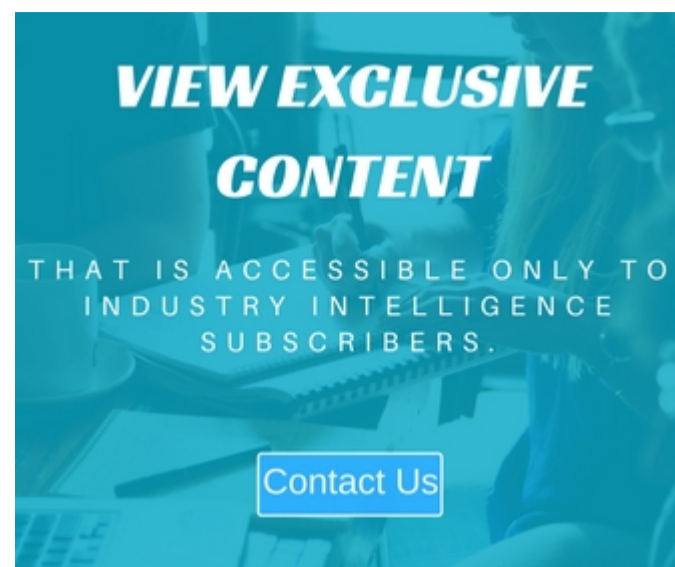
## Why Go Waterless?

According to the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#), a global nonprofit working to advance the circular economy, moving from a liquid to a solid product can:

- Lower the cost of transport and reduce transport emissions
- Allow brands to use less packaging material per volume of product
- Increase e-commerce opportunities
- Present an opportunity to rethink the delivery model
- Make it easier to provide large quantities of product
- Be more convenient for consumers

Here are some real-life ways that waterless products are helping brands help the environment:

### ***Reduce or eliminate packaging***



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The very nature of waterless products' form and formulation means they require less – and sometimes zero – packaging, allowing companies to drastically reduce or eliminate the need for product packaging. Waterless products can more easily use packaging like biodegradable or compostable paper pouches, recyclable paperboard cartons and curbside-recyclable aluminum instead of plastic tubes, jars and bottles.

### **Reduce water use**

By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population may face water shortages, according to [WWF](#). That's why major CPG companies like Estée Lauder, L'Oréal, Procter & Gamble and Unilever have all committed to reducing and sustainably managing their water use. One way to do that is through product formulations. By eliminating water from the product formulation – and reducing water needed to make plastic packaging – manufacturers can lower products' overall water footprint and work toward their water sustainability targets.

### **Reduce carbon footprint**

Shipping small, solid objects rather than huge, heavy liquids not only reduces packaging and packaging-related carbon emissions, but also reduces emissions associated with shipping. Less volume means more products in fewer boxes. Less weight per product means a lighter carbon footprint (and lower logistics costs). Why ship plastic bottles – mostly filled with water – around the world when consumers can just add the water on their own? One waterless-products brand estimates it [lowers transport emissions by 94%](#) by not shipping the water.

### **Improve product life cycle**

Companies are also beginning to evaluate product end-of-life, meaning how products are used – and disposed of – by consumers. A life cycle analysis studies all the potential contributions to a product's carbon footprint, including suppliers, transportation, production and disposal. Waterless products typically last longer than their liquid counterparts, further reinforcing their improved environmental footprint along the entire supply chain. Lush says its shampoo bars can last for 80 to 100 washes, replacing three 250ml bottles of shampoo.

### **Clean, concentrated formulas**

Waterless products can also help companies appeal to consumers who prioritize natural or “clean” formulations. [No synthetic preservatives](#) are needed to keep Lush shampoo bars fresh because they're formulated in a way that inhibits bacterial growth. Bacteria need certain conditions to thrive, including water. So products that are made with little or no water are inherently self-preserving – and can stay that way for years. Not using chemical preservatives makes waterless formulations a good option for people who want clean products or for those who have sensitive skin. Also, ingredients in waterless products are more powerful because they are – quite literally – not watered down.

*Rachel Carter is the personal care and household products editor for [Industry Intelligence](#), which can help YOU better address your own industry challenges. To arm yourself with the latest market intelligence, contact [ClientCare@IndustryIntel.com](mailto:ClientCare@IndustryIntel.com). Ask us about our interactive intelligence map and search bot on Microsoft Teams.*

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